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The Mission Study Class

A Booklet of Suggestions

on Making

Mission Study

Interesting

and

Effective

By
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Mission Study in the Church of the Brethren

The field of missionary education in the Church of the Brethren has been largely untilled, excepting in very recent years, consequently there is yet much virgin soil. Here and there a spot has been broken, and its soil of human hearts in our church, with a youth so pure and keen, has been known to bear abundant fruitage.

The first organized attempt at missionary education was in the form of the Missionary Reading Circle, a movement organized in the nineties with Brother Wilbur B. Stover as its first and only president. Many of our brethren and sisters engaged in reading missionary books as suggested by this Circle, but interest in the movement seems to have waned after a few years.

In 1911 a plan was adopted by Annual Conference for missionary education in the church. This plan involves an organization of the Brotherhood by the choice of Missionary Educational Secretaries in each District, and local Missionary Committees in each church.

The plan at once became effective and showed merit to recommend it to the succeeding years. In 1913-1914 the spirit of Mission Study seemed to descend upon us in a movement that promised permanence and influence. That winter Brother Galen B. Royer produced a Mission Study book entitled "Christian Heroism in Heathen Lands," intended as a first book

for study in class groups. Interest was awakened and many classes were organized. Diplomas have been issued to hundreds of pupils, who in those and succeeding years have studied this and other books.

A course is now proposed for use in our colleges, and another more suitable for the more elementary work among our churches, is recommended. But even yet the field has scarcely been entered. We see hopes for the future as large numbers of our brethren and sisters and young people take up the study of the Master's great white harvest fields.

The Necessity for Mission Study

Missionary education is the avowed foe of ignorance, lack of interest, indifference to God's commands, covetousness among God's children, and selfishness in division of the fruitage of shop and herd and field.

To be interested in missionary endeavor we must know what has been accomplished by great apostles of the modern missionary age. We must become acquainted with them, live with them, travel with them, know something of their hardships and victories.

We must know something of the lands in which they labored, the peoples whom they went out to help, the fruitage reaped from their years spent in the isolated places of the world, and lastly, the permanent results of the entrance of God's Word into the hearts that were dark and hopeless.

We cannot read our Bibles correctly, or un-

derstand them fully, or God's wishes intelligently, without knowing what He meant when He told His disciples that they should be His witnesses "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Nor can we understand His statement that "all power is given unto Me," or His promise, "Lo, I am with you always" unless we see how He has taken men of faith and resolute purpose, and through them entered into forbidden, unknown lands, overturned their age-old systems, swept away the cobwebs of cruelty and superstition, and replaced worn-out institutions and customs with the youthful organizations of Christianity and life.

Indeed, to understand God, it is as necessary to know of His present victories in lands where sin has reigned supreme unto the twentieth century, as it is to be acquainted with the Jehovah of hosts, in whose might and strength Joshua brushed aside the foes of heaven on the fields of Ajalon.

Why the Church Must Foster Mission Study

We are more than two hundred years old as an organization. We are in our very youth in missionary activity. We have the Whole Gospel and we should give it a complete interpretation by being foremost in carrying the Good News to the Whole World. Without this conception of our task and this program, the revelation through us will be incomplete.

We have a rapidly-growing force of missionary workers on foreign soil. Our fields

have been sanctified by the willing sacrifice of young manhood and womanhood. The dusty doors of past days, and great, unoccupied fields, white, falling, crying out for the reapers and the garners, are before us. We are responsible for millions of people in this generation. We can reach them if we undertake the task.

Our home fields are not developed as they should be. Many great cities in our land are unoccupied by us. We have cities of several hundred thousand in which not a missionary or a minister now resides. Unoccupied rural districts are yearning for such a Gospel as we possess. We have the money, we have the men, we have the ability to reach them if we but dare and do.

Our church, therefore, must foster missions, because of the men we have on the foreign field and because of the task before us in the unoccupied regions at home. Missionary intelligence must always precede activity. Our young people must catch the vision of our future. This can be received best through the quickening impulses gained in sitting down together in groups that will study and discuss the great problems of God. He will reveal; He will point out; He will lead us to discover, each one in his own time and in God's own way, what His will is for each individual life. He cannot do this unless we learn to trust Him and to follow where He leads.

Truly, missionary education undergirds our whole future success as a missionary church.

The Power Derived from Mission Study

We can all pray, but we must understand what to pray for to make prayer effective.

We can all give, but how shall we know how to give or what for unless we study?

We can all go, but where and when shall we go, unless brought to honest consecration before God?

These three sentences above express the power.

"A missionary preached that day,
But knew not from whence his power;
At home a little group had met,
To pray for him an hour."

We have evidence today of the effectiveness of the Mission Study Class. Study itself has not produced the power. It has, rather, led the student, searching for the source of power, into the very presence of Him who has said, "All power is given unto Me, both in heaven and on earth."

Young folks have gone out from the classroom, wondering what they could do to make their lives count for the Master. They have learned to know what yet remains to be done; they have been enabled to see how the weakness of humanity can be transformed into marvelous efficiency for God.

Therefore it is well for the Missionary Committee and the Mission Study leader to realize that they are dealing with possibilities in the

pupils which they cannot know or understand. Only God understands. They deal with the heavenly dynamic of spiritual forces which will translate their pupils into veritable giants of strength.

Mission Study will simply enable God and the individual student to let loose the power of that individual's life into channels of great blessing, be he a minister, shopman, or a day laborer.

What Is Mission Study?

Mission Study is simply a careful study of missionary facts, aims, purposes, accomplishments. It is an intelligent inquiry into the motives, causes, victories and possibilities of God working in the hearts and lives of men.

It may be a study of the geography of the countries in which certain missionaries have labored; to understand the mountains, the valleys, the climate, the rivers of that land. It may be a study of the products of that country, its fields, its herds, its minerals, its possibilities of material development.

It may be a study of the people themselves; their customs, their family life, their religions, their social life, their political life and ambitions, their weaknesses, their inherent strength. Or it may mean something of their history, their ancestors, movements leading up to their present conditions.

It may mean the life of the missionary who went among them, his method of approach to them, his success, his defeats, his victories.

It may mean the personal life of these workers, their school-days, their call to the field, their influence on the homeland, their journeys, their homes abroad, their schools, colleges, industrial institutes, medical institutions.

Lastly, it will mean a study into what God wants done with these people, what can be accomplished with them, what He has commanded in their behalf, and what we are going to do about it.

What Should a Mission Study Class Accomplish?

A Mission Study Class may reasonably hope to accomplish results that will be evident in the life of its members later in life. Likely there is no brief treatise on any subject which will exert such a permanent influence in so short a time with as little study or equipment as a Study Class with a well-written text on missions. It will inspire:

A wholesome reverence for God, and an abiding faith in the power of prayer.

A deepened sense of the responsibility borne by each individual in making the kingdom known to the world.

A developing conviction of the necessity of evangelizing the world.

A deeper interest in the work of the local church, and an understanding of what it means to a community and neighborhood.

A sympathy with the missionaries of our church who have gone to heathen nations.

A love for the pastors who are in the isolated places of our country and in our cities.

A sense of stewardship of the possessions that God has given to us.

The class must not be expected to accomplish all things. Revolutions cannot reasonably be expected to work out from a short course on missions. But it directs the mind into channels of sympathy, interest and intelligence. It generates a spirit that will seek for more facts and live them out in actual experience.

How Shall the Class Be Organized?

Who Shall Push the Organization?

The importance of the first steps in organizing a church for mission study are supreme. It must not be considered that enrollment in a class means volunteering for the mission field. Such a feeling is easily fostered. A class is simply to meet for the purpose of gathering information that will be valuable, no matter where the pupils be located. This should be made clear.

Each church should have a Missionary Committee. This is in accordance with our Conference decision of 1911. If there is such a committee this work would naturally fall to it. The absence of a Missionary Committee need be no bar to a class if somebody will push the work. The elder can choose a committee for this purpose; the Christian Workers can appoint a Mission Study Committee.

Presenting the Cause to the Church.

It would be well to ask your minister to announce the meeting to consider the subject. The Christian Workers can well allow one of their meetings to be devoted at least partially to a presentation of the work.

Just before mentioning, it would be well to pass out enrollment cards for prospective pupils. These cards may be obtained free by addressing the General Mission Board. Immediately after this the subject should be forcibly presented.

The presentation should include:

A statement of the value of Mission Study.

A suggestion as to the length of the course.

When the class may meet, the length of the session.

The main points of the course recommended.

Then the invitation will be given for members to join a class. They will be asked to sign the cards. It should be emphasized that this does not obligate the signers to do other than give the study a fair trial.

Taking Steps to Organize.

Having gathered the cards and gotten the list of prospective members, a short session should be called for them immediately after dismissal of the service. This session should be simply to set the time for a meeting to perfect an organization.

Duties of Class Officers

(a) The Teacher. Great care should be

given the choice of a teacher. We can safely suggest that the most sympathetic, wide-awake person in your church is none too good for this place. The teacher should never be chosen as an experiment, or for the purpose of getting some particular person interested in the subject. The issues are too vital for this.

Among his qualifications we might mention:

His personality. He must be one who is winning in manner. One who not only can teach, but please the class and lead by example; one who has some sense of humor, ability to adapt himself to any new condition, who knows how to awaken discussion and properly direct it.

His education. This may not be of the best, though it is wise to choose one who has had some experience in teaching, if this can be done without in any way doing violence to the subject in hand. If the teacher be of a studious mind, or one who has had the course, it will be advantageous. A class must choose the best available and go ahead.

His vision and sympathy should be such that the cause which he must present will find in him a friend, who not only feels the importance and sacredness of the subject, but has spiritual insight into the possibilities of the study wisely directed.

(b) The President. The president should have charge of the class meetings, opening and closing of the recitation periods, and of any business sessions. He should have charge of the routine duties falling to a president of any organization. His qualifications should include,

among other things, a disposition to push the interests of the class for all there is in him.

(c) The Vice-President. He should be at all sessions and should have a perfect understanding of the work and preside at any sessions in the absence of the president.

(d) The Secretary. The secretary should keep a record of all class matters, a correct list of class members, and an attendance record. He should keep minutes of each session, do the necessary correspondence in securing books, attend to examination questions, and keep such data as are in the province of this officer.

(e) Treasurer. The treasurer should have charge of funds, collecting for the books and remitting for the amount to the proper office, either himself or through the secretary. Sometimes the office of the secretary and treasurer are combined in the same person.

Organization for Study

It is logically the Missionary Committee's duty to have charge of the prospective class until it is fully organized. The first meeting of the class will reasonably be expected to be held in a private home, or at the church if possible. In the city the church may serve the purpose better; in the country a home may be more advantageous and convenient. The writer is convinced, however, that all religious activities should be centered at the church, so far as possible.

First, a teacher should be chosen. This

should be done with great care. The committee in charge may do well to help in directing the class towards the proper person.

Other officers also will be necessary. There should be a president, a vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer. The class should not be overorganized—only sufficiently to have everything work well. Certainly care should be exercised in choosing, for upon the organization interest much of the success of the class will depend. The committee should write, before this organization meeting, to the General Mission Board, Elgin, Ill., for suggestions as to books. The course as outlined by our Board should always be followed or, if for any reason it is not, the Board should be asked for suggestions on the book to be used.

If you have a District Missionary Secretary it will be well to direct correspondence to him. His name will be found in the church Yearbook. But if you fail to receive a reply from him, then correspond directly with the General Mission Board.

Having decided upon a book, the secretary should get the names of all who desire it, and the book should be ordered at once from the Brethren Publishing House, Elgin, Ill. All members should have a book, though one copy in a home will doubtless prove sufficient.

The Class Membership

Whom May We Expect to Attend?

The opportunity should be given to all to become members of the class. Those in charge

should not feel overwhelmed if a large number decide to take the work, nor should they feel discouraged if the number is small. Some of our best church workers have at times been members of small Mission Study groups.

The study will especially appeal to young people, and hence to them should attention be especially directed. Some older members will take great delight in the class, while others who are scarcely in their teens may get more good from the work than those much older. Do not discourage any one from joining.

The Size of the Class.

This should not be more than ten in most instances, though the number will vary. It will not be wise to divide the class if there are not more than twelve or fourteen. However, this is at the discretion of the membership and the Missionary Committee. A group of from six to ten is generally considered the best size. Many of our churches can very easily have three or four of these groups.

Attendance at Class.

Of course all will be expected to attend regularly. But there may be some who, because of isolation or sickness, cannot do this. Encourage all of these to keep up the reading and study at home if they cannot come. Some may live at such a distance that they never can be present. But they can take the course at home if they so desire. The Missionary Committee can look after these. If a sufficient

number to form two or more classes, enroll for study, it will be well to divide them into groups according to age. The best results will be obtained where this is carefully done.

The Class Hour

At the organization the time will be determined for the regular meetings of the class. They should be held at least weekly—seldom oftener. The length of the class period should usually be one hour—by no means not so long that the class will seem to weary of the recitation.

An order of service similar to the following should be observed in class:

Short Scripture reading and prayer.
Secretary's report of the last session.
Any possible items of business.
The class study period:
- Very short review of preceding lesson.
- Recitation of lesson.
- Reports from any to whom special assignments have been made.
- Discussion of the principal points in the lesson.
- Assignment of next lesson.
- Brief prayer and close.

This program is meant to be suggestive only. It will not do well always to follow any given form. Each class must be governed somewhat by its circumstances. Full freedom of action should be employed by the teacher. Special assignments should be made by the teacher at the preceding meeting, and those to whom the

assignments are made should be impressed with the importance of their subject. Do not allow the session to become monotonous. Evoke live discussions, but do not allow them to degenerate into meaningless arguments. Do not allow a few bright members to monopolize the class hour. Teach the class as you would a live bunch of students in a school or college classroom.

Suggestions to Leader

You are in the business of the King when you are in class session, and hence should feel that the stewardship of the hour is most important.

You should have your lesson well prepared before assembling for the session. Plenty of time will likely be available during the evenings of the week. If two or more from the same home are in the class, the lesson can be read aloud and the whole household enjoy it with you. In most of our homes this will prove a most profitable evening for parents whose children are in the work.

Do not combine social functions with the class hour. Our young people in the country will be apt to make this an occasion for social enjoyment. But thoughts of refreshments, games, fudge and marshmallows should not be allowed to interfere with the study hour. Both refreshments and Mission Study are pleasant, but the combination is not the most profitable for the study

Ever keep the proper end in view. Think of

the results to be gained, the permanent help to be received, and the obligation you owe to your missionaries to study your lessons well.

To the teacher we would say, Hold your class to the point at issue. Do not presume to lecture—the student can hear missionary sermons in the church. Awaken discussion; raise pertinent questions.

If the subject be a biography, ascertain the call, the motive, the childhood, the youth, the preparation of the missionary. If the subject be on evangelistic, industrial, medical, or educational lines, seek to find out how the missionary related this work to the salvation of the souls whom he went out to reach.

Let the teacher and the class be in prayer for this work and for the success of missionary effort the world over.

Some Helps that Will Be Found Valuable

Each class should have a large map of the world. Whatever the subject may be, all should know exactly the geographical location of what they study. If the subject be biography, or travel, an outline map of the country should be secured for each pupil, who may upon this map insert the date, paths of travel or location of events in the study.

A Notebook. Each pupil should be provided with a notebook in which to write the points that he has found of special importance to himself. This book may provide much material for talks, reviews and programs later on in

life. The class hour is too brief for fully developing every splendid impression received.

The class can find help on our own fields in the Missionary Visitor. Pictures clipped from this paper, items of interest, or paragraphs from letters appearing in its pages will be of interest and profit for discussion and encouragement. Other magazines of a general missionary character are recommended to the class, such as the Missionary Review of the World, The World Outlook, Record of Christian Work, and Everyland.

Also the Book of books has much of a missionary character teeming from all of its pages. Study Abraham, the apostle Paul and the various characters who lived the ideals of heaven into the activities of the world.

And lest you fail to remember from other suggestions, feel free to call upon the General Mission Board at any time you desire information.

After Completing the Study Then What?

The Examination.

The general plan of our Mission Study work is to have one book as a class text. Six other books, carefully selected, constitute a Reading Circle Course—books to be read individually, and at home. If classes desire to take up any of these Reading Circle books as a class it is perfectly splendid, and we encourage it wherever possible. The book completed, examination should be taken, for the General Mission Board offers a splendid Missionary

Certificate, size 11x14, suitable for framing, to those who pass the given test. Questions are supplied from the Board on any book that is recommended for study. The examination is to be conducted with the usual care given to an examination in school. Pupils should not see the questions until they are seated for the test. If the teacher is to take the test with the class it would be well to ask that the questions be sent to some one else in the church. After the examination the papers should be handed to the secretary, who will forward them to the General Mission Board, Elgin, Ill., with 25 cents each for the certificates, which will be sent as promptly as the papers can be graded, or the money will be returned.

Graduation Program.

The Mission Study work will be of value not only to the class, for the church will profit by it if it is properly handled. It will be well to plan for a public program some evening at the church. Some classes have made this a most effective program and one of intense interest. The Christian Workers can well allow the class their period, and wise is the church that will give an entire evening to this splendid program.

Of course, one of the important features of this program will be the presentation of diplomas to the class. This should be at the close of the exercises and should be done by some one specially chosen because of his fit-

ness for this task. The pastor or the elder is the logical one.

How Conserve the Missionary Impulse?

Shall we simply take this course and then do nothing to utilize the interest gained? Great care should be observed on this point by the Missionary Committee and the teacher of the class.

Why open a door unless we enter? Why study unless we act? Why read unless we interpret? Why hear the Father's message unless we go? Why learn of the needs unless we pray?

The Seal Course books previously mentioned are to assist in doing what this provides. The entire course should be completed in a reasonable length of time, as systematically as possible. After having completed these additional six books, the habit of reading mission books will have been somewhat acquired. Other books of missionary character are available in countless number, and the Board will gladly make suggestions if you desire. In the little leaflet, "Mission Study Prospectus for the Churches," is to be found a bibliography of helpful missionary books. Next autumn there will be other books recommended, if the class desires to take up further study.

There is a great door, and effectual, opened to him who is interested in this great world-wide, age-old, eternal subject. Special support of workers, systematic giving in the congregation, prayers with point and appeal, influence

in the proper direction exerted upon others not in mission study—all these things may exercise one in the further development of a missionary ideal and purpose for life.

If all members and adherents of the Church of the Brethren work together to inaugurate a campaign of missionary education in the church, it will do much towards definitely awakening in all of us a sense of our duty and inspire us to mobilize our entire forces for the spread of the kingdom of God.

For other information desired on any phase of Mission Study, not treated herein, please feel perfectly free to write to

GENERAL MISSION BOARD of the Church of the Brethren
Elgin, Illinois